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ABSTRACT

In spring 1998, the Arizona Department of Commerce's Office of Workforce Development Policy commissioned a statewide opinion poll to assess public attitudes toward the state's plan for economic development, as it is being implemented through the Governor's Strategic Partnership for Economic Development (GSPED). More than 2,000 Arizonans participated in the poll, including 600 parents, 600 businesses, 500 teachers, and 500 school administrators. "Brand name" recognition of GSPED was low. Levels of awareness of GSPED among the groups surveyed were as follows: school administrators, 23%; businesses, 14%; teachers, 13%; and parents, 7%. Although respondents who were aware of GSPED were significantly more likely to support it, 43% of "aware" businesses and 33% of "unaware" businesses indicated that GSPED smacks of government interference. It was concluded that the state should recruit increased private sector involvement in continuing efforts to link economic and work force development. Survey data were also analyzed by location (1,566 urban and 624 rural residents). Residency alone was not statistically significant; however, residency of specific constituent groups mattered. For example, rural parents expressed support for issues more frequently than urban parents, and urban educators took a stand, whereas rural educators more frequently responded "not sure." (MN)

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Differences in Public Understanding of and Reactions to GSPED Based on Awareness of the Initiative Arizona Workforce Development Briefing Paper #1

Differences in Public Understanding of and Reactions to GSPED Based on Urban-Rural Residency Arizona Workforce Development Briefing Paper #2

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Differences in Public Understanding of and Reactions to GSPED Based on Awareness of the Initiative

Arizona Workforce Development Briefing Paper #1 *November 1998*

by Judith A. Vandegrift, Morrison Institute for Public Policy
in consultation with Joel Wright, Wright Consulting Services

In the spring of 1998, the Office of Workforce Development Policy (OWDP) of the Arizona Department of Commerce commissioned a statewide opinion poll to assess public attitudes toward the state's plan for economic development as implemented through GSPED ("G-Speed") — the Governor's Strategic Partnership for Economic Development. The poll was designed to assess both the public's understanding of GSPED and their reactions to using the concept of industry clusters as a tool for organizing both economic and workforce development efforts.

More than 2,000 Arizonans participated in the poll, including 600 parents, 600 businesses, 500 teachers and 500 school administrators (i.e., principals and superintendents). These sample sizes yield results that are statistically accurate within a 95% level of confidence (with margins of error not exceeding ± 4.5 percentage points). Results of the poll, discussed in an earlier briefing paper[1], were summarized in relation to:

- overall public awareness of GSPED,
- support for GSPED,
- attitudes toward GSPED as a tool for economic development,
- attitudes toward workforce development, and
- linking workforce development with GSPED.

Polling results showed that awareness, or "brand name" recognition, of GSPED was low. However, once the concept of industry clusters was explained to respondents, support for the initiative and related workforce development efforts was higher than opposition for every question posed. Even so, results also indicated that many respondents were unsure about GSPED and its implications.

Because of the low percentage of respondents who had heard about GSPED and high percentage of responses indicating uncertainty, a question was posed by members of the Governors' Council on Workforce Development Policy as to whether polling results were based truly on informed opinions. Specifically, the question pertained to whether the 14% (n = 308) of the respondents who had heard of GSPED answered questions differently than the 86% (n = 1,892) who had never heard of the initiative. Therefore, at the request of the Council, results of the polling were analyzed in order to answer the question:

> *Does "brand name" recognition (i.e., awareness) of GSPED affect respondents' answers?*

The answer to this question is, in short, Yes.

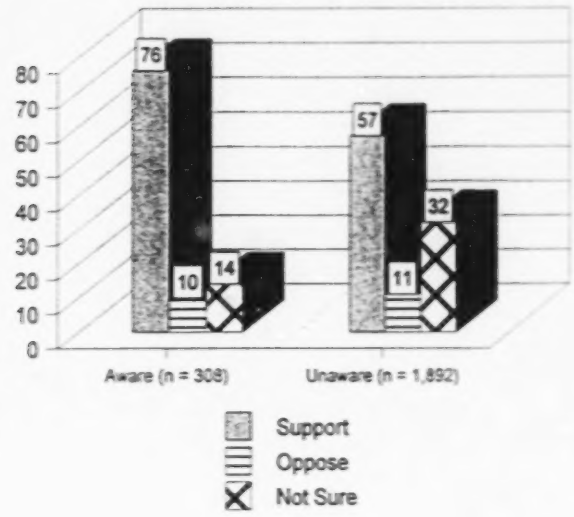
In general, there are statistically significant differences between respondents who are aware of GSPED versus those who are not. Those who have heard about GSPED are significantly more likely to indicate support for the initiative, and efforts to link workforce development with economic development, than their peers (i.e.,unaware respondents).

This holds true for all four constituent groups: parents, businesses, teachers and school administrators. These groups are represented in the "aware" sample as follows: 23% of all school administrators surveyed had heard about GSPED, as had 14% of the businesses surveyed, 13% of the teachers, and 7% of the parents.

Whereas the "aware" sample is more likely to respond positively to questions posed, "aware" and "unaware" samples do *not* vary significantly from one another on levels of opposition (which are relatively low across all questions). However, "unaware" respondents are more than twice as likely as aware respondents to indicate that they are "not sure" about GSPED. This pattern of responses is illustrated in Figure 1 which shows levels of support for, opposition to, and uncertainty toward using GSPED as a tool for economic development.

Figure 1

Arizonans' Support for GSPED As a Tool to Develop the Economy (by Awareness)



The pattern of responses holds true for most questions asked on the survey. One notable exception is found regarding attitudes toward using GSPED as a tool to develop Arizona's economy. In response to the statement "GSPED smacks of too much interference in private business by government," both "aware" and "unaware" businesses are more likely to agree with this statement than other constituent groups. Forty-three percent of "aware" businesses and 33% of "unaware" businesses indicated that GSPED smacks of government interference. (The difference between aware and unaware businesses is statistically significant. "Aware" businesses are more likely than their "unaware" peers to view GSPED in a potentially negative light.)

Another exception to the pattern of responses is in terms of attitudes toward using "the GSPED system" as a tool for educating and training Arizona's workforce. Typically, "aware" parents show the highest levels of support for the concepts measured than any other group. For example, they are most likely to voice the opinions that businesses are having a hard time filling jobs with competent employees, that most people coming out of high school are not prepared for the world of work, and that workforce development efforts like GSPED will result in better-prepared and more productive employees.

In terms of "what it would take" to develop a workforce development system linked with GSPED, responses were analyzed with respect to four issues—whether people support or oppose:

- targeting resources to specific populations (e.g., high school students, the working poor),
- working to establish closer cooperation and communication between business/community leaders and state government in deciding how education and training programs are developed and how funds are spent,
- obtaining greater business commitment to help develop the system, and
- consolidating of at least *some* existing publicly funded workforce development programs.

Both "aware" and "unaware" respondents were significantly more likely to support these notions than oppose them. However, "aware" teachers voice the highest levels of opposition to all concepts measured (ranging from 16% opposed to targeting resources to 26% opposed to consolidation).

In conclusion, awareness of GSPED appears to make a great deal of difference in terms of levels of support versus uncertainty toward using the notion of industry clusters as a way to organize and link economic development with workforce development. The more aware one is, the more supportive. The exception to this pattern is among "aware" businesses, who tend to view GSPED as "government interference" with respect to economic development. This finding suggests a need for the state to recruit increased private sector involvement in continuing efforts to link economic and workforce development.

Endnote: Baseline data on GSPED polling results are reported in *Public Understanding of and Reactions to GSPED*, Arizona School To Work Briefing Paper #12 (August 1998). Tempe, AZ: Arizona State University, Morrison Institute for Public Policy.

For additional information about Arizona's Workforce Development efforts contact:

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Differences in Public Understanding of and Reactions to GSPED Based on Urban-Rural Residency

Arizona Workforce Development Briefing Paper #2 *November 1998*

by Judith A. Vandegrift, Morrison Institute for Public Policy
in consultation with Joel Wright, Wright Consulting Services

In the spring of 1998, the Office of Workforce Development Policy (OWDP) of the Arizona Department of Commerce commissioned a statewide opinion poll to assess public attitudes toward the state's plan for economic development as implemented through GSPED ("G-Speed") — the Governor's Strategic Partnership for Economic Development. The poll was designed to assess both the public's understanding of GSPED and their reactions to using the concept of industry clusters as a tool for organizing both economic and workforce development efforts.

More than 2,000 Arizonans participated in the poll, including 600 parents, 600 businesses, 500 teachers and 500 school administrators (i.e., principals and superintendents). These sample sizes yield results that are statistically accurate within a 95% level of confidence (with margins of error not exceeding ± 4.5 percentage points). Results of the poll, discussed in an earlier briefing paper[1], were summarized in relation to:

- overall public awareness of GSPED,
- support for GSPED,
- attitudes toward GSPED as a tool for economic development,
- attitudes toward workforce development, and
- linking workforce development with GSPED.

Polling results showed that awareness, or "brand name" recognition, of GSPED was low. However, once the concept of industry clusters was explained to respondents, support for the initiative and related workforce development efforts was higher than opposition for every question posed. Even so, results also indicated that many respondents were unsure about GSPED and its implications.

One question posed by members of the Governors' Council on Workforce Development Policy pertained to whether polling results vary by urban versus rural residency. Specifically, the question was raised as to whether the responses of rural residents differ from those who live in urban areas. Therefore, at the request of the Council, results of the polling were analyzed in order to answer the question:

> *Does urban versus rural residency affect respondents' answers?*

The answer to this question is, in short, No.

For the purposes of this analysis, residents of Maricopa and Pima Counties are considered "urban" and those from all other counties are considered "rural." Of the 2,200 respondents to the survey, 71% (n = 1,566) are urban and 29% (n = 624) are rural. Among the rural respondents are 39% of all school administrators surveyed, 35% of the teachers, 24% of the parents and 20% of the businesses.

In general, there are no statistically significant differences in survey results between urban and rural respondents. As groups, urban and rural respondents are likely to support or oppose specific questions in the same proportions (± 4.5 percentage points) regardless of their residency. Table 1 illustrates this pattern of responses as it pertains to the question of using GSPED as a tool for economic development.

Table 1
Percentage of Urban and Rural Arizonans Who Are Supportive of Using GSPED As a Tool to Develop the Economy

	Urban (n = 1,566)	Rural (n = 624)
Administrators	64	60
Businesses	62	62
Parents	60	61
Teachers	56	55

However, whereas in the aggregate urban and rural residency is not predictive of results, there *are* urban-rural differences within and between specific constituent groups in response to select questions. For example:

- Urban teachers (42%) are nearly twice as likely to *disagree* with the notion that GSPED is for "high tech industries only" compared to rural teachers (24%) who, for the most part, "not sure" in response to this question.

- More urban teachers (56%) than rural teachers (49%) say that the notion of industry clusters helps them better understand business opportunities and challenges.

- More urban teachers (23%) than rural teachers (15%) agree that people coming out of high school are well-prepared for the world of work than their rural counterparts, of whom only 15% agree.

- All school personnel (i.e., both urban and rural teachers and administrators) are more likely to say that GSPED does *not* "smack of government interference" compared to both urban and rural businesses and parents.

- Nearly one-third of all businesses, regardless of their locale, agree that employees are satisfied with their jobs and not interested in additional education and training — more than any other group.

- Nearly two-thirds of all businesses and parents, regardless of residency, agree that workforce development efforts like GSPED will result in better-prepared and more productive employees more than both urban and rural school personnel.

In terms of "what it would take" to develop a workforce development system linked with GSPED, responses were analyzed with respect to four issues—whether people support or oppose:

- targeting resources to specific populations (e.g., high school students, the working poor),
- working to establish closer cooperation and communication between business/community leaders and state government in deciding how education and training programs are developed and how funds are spent,
- obtaining greater business commitment to help develop the system, and
- consolidating of at least *some* existing publicly funded workforce development programs.

Urban and rural businesses are the most supportive of all four concepts. In terms of opposition, which in no case exceeds 20% of a specific constituent group, urban parents and teachers oppose these initiatives most frequently. Both rural and urban school administrators, and rural teachers, are most unsure about these issues.

In conclusion, *residency alone does not appear to make a great deal of difference in terms of survey responses. However, the residency of a specific constituent group (e.g., businesses) can and does make a difference with respect to select questions.* For example, urban and rural businesses most frequently express support for the concepts measured by the survey. By the same token, urban businesses also most frequently oppose select concepts (albeit in lower percentages than for support). This suggests that urban businesses are somewhat polarized.

Similarly, while rural parents frequently express support for the issues discussed on the survey, a proportion of urban parents (ranging from 4%-31%) represent a pocket of opposition.

In general, rural educators (both teachers and administrators) represent higher percentages of respondents who are "not sure" compared to all other groups, whereas their urban counterparts appear much more likely to take a stand either for or against specific issues.

Endnote: Baseline data on GSPED polling results are reported in *Public Understanding of and Reactions to GSPED*, Arizona School To Work Briefing Paper #12 (August 1998). Tempe, AZ: Arizona State University, Morrison Institute for Public Policy.

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